

SOFTWARE

PREVIEW

You may have an internet security suite, but if you want to be totally secure, you need encryption too. Steganos's Privacy Suite 2008 includes all the tools you need to ensure your data, emails and passwords stay safe.

The suite lets you keep data in a 'safe' encrypted with 256-bit AES. There's another safe for your emails, contacts, calendar appointments and tasks, and instead of using a password to open the safes, you can choose a series of images. Alternatively, use your iPod as the key to a safe, or as a portable safe itself. There's also a data shredder to destroy unwanted files on your hard disk, and a password manager, which can also be used on a Pocket PC device. Finally, you can hide sensitive data in pictures and music – very James Bond.

In short, it's the Swiss Army knife of data security. Next month, we'll take a closer look and tell you whether or not you should buy it.

Jim Martin

Deputy Editor



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1&1 eShop

★★★★★

Business eShop £12 inc VAT per month
Business Pro eShop £29 inc VAT per month
From www.1and1.com

It's often said that the internet lets anyone set up shop. While that's true, it can be hard work making an online store look good and ensuring that people can find it. Hosting company 1&1 thinks it has solved that problem with its eShop package.

It's a service that allows you to enter the details of your business and the products that you sell, via your browser, choose a template and have a set of shop pages generated automatically at the web address of your choice. All the complicated aspects of taking money are sorted out for you, with an integrated shopping cart that supports PayPal, Protx and WorldPay, although for the latter two you'll need to pay the appropriate monthly fees.

To help people find the shop, you can automatically list your products on eBay and submit them to sites such as Kelkoo.

Setting up shop is quite straightforward, with an online wizard that asks for your basic business details, before you get into the harder task of entering product information, weights, shipping details and so on. It's not too difficult, but can be tedious. A new product is entered

SUMMARY

- ✓ Simple way to sell online
- ✓ eBay integration
- ✗ Slow web interface; lots of pop-ups

BUSINESS ESHOP SPECIFICATIONS 200 products, 100 categories, eBay integration, easy web-based setup. 1GB space, 40GB traffic per month

BUSINESS PRO ESHOP SPECIFICATIONS 1,000 products, 200 categories, adds item variants, stock control and discount options, 2GB space, 100GB traffic per month
DETAILS www.1and1.com



▲ There's a wide range of templates that you can use to create a good-looking shop with the minimum of effort

in a pop-up window and to add a photo another window pops up. Luckily, you can import your product data from a spreadsheet, and there's even an example you can download to see how all the columns should be set up, which is a thoughtful touch.

We found the site design tool, where you select

templates, a bit quirky. The button to confirm a choice was hidden by the template thumbnails. But on the whole, it's easy to get an eShop up and running. The £12 package is good for people trying online selling for the first time, especially with links to eBay and submission to services such as Kelkoo. It's a shame it lacks options for stock control and variants such as sizes and colours. For these, you have opt for the £29 monthly option.

Nigel Whitfield

CAKEWALK Sonar 7 Producer Edition

★★★★★

£329 inc VAT
From www.sub.co.uk

Sonar has received numerous enthusiastic *Computer Shopper* reviews, thanks to masses of sophisticated features that leave little to be desired. Even so, Cakewalk has managed to pack version 7 with a generous portion of exciting new tools.

No other general-purpose recording software can compete with Producer Edition's plug-in bundle, and version 7 expands the gap even further. High-quality EQ, multiband compression and limiter effects add up to an excellent mastering suite for adding extra oomph and sparkle to finished mixes, and they come in handy in a range of other circumstances. Existing compressor and gate effects now include side-chain inputs so the volume of one channel can fluctuate in response to the volume of another. This is something few recording packages offer (Steinberg has just introduced it in Cubase 4.1) and it's a valuable feature for all sorts of corrective and creative tricks. The virtual instrument plug-in collection covers everything from orchestral emulations to evolving synths and loop mangling.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Jam-packed with powerful tools
- ✓ Plug-in bundle is better than ever
- ✗ Interface could be neater

MUSIC-PRODUCTION SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista (32- or 64-bit), 1.3GHz processor, 256MB RAM (2.8GHz, 1GB recommended), 3.8GB disk space
PART CODE 10CWSP70010C
DETAILS www.cakewalk.com



▲ Sonar 7 scores highly for ease of use

We're disappointed that Cakewalk has done little to develop the interface. The Piano Roll MIDI editor has various workflow improvements, including a hugely configurable trio of editing tools, but the average user is unlikely to unleash its potential. Meanwhile, the deluge of buttons dotted around the interface is in need of simplification. Various other features would benefit from a little refinement and, on the whole, Sonar doesn't feel quite as polished as some of its rivals.

Ultimately, Sonar scores highly for ease of use and the quality of the results. The plug-in bundle alone is worth more than the £329 price. Sonar is ideal for musicians who want a sophisticated application that's packed with inspiring music-making toys, and are prepared to invest time to get the most from it.

Ben Pitt

SERIF PhotoPlus X2

★★★★

£60 inc VAT

From www.serif.com/store

Serif isn't particularly subtle about the inspiration for its products. Its video-editing application bears an uncanny resemblance to Sony Vegas, and the image-editing software reviewed here owes a lot to Adobe Photoshop. This imitative approach brings both positives and negatives. PhotoPlus tends to be a step or two behind its muse, but Serif is able to draw inspiration not just from the low-cost Elements but also from the full version of Photoshop.

One key feature it shares with Photoshop rather than Elements is layer masks, which allow parts of a layer to be hidden but not deleted. They're extremely useful for graphic design, allowing layers to fade away as they stretch across the page. Masks are also crucial for creating photo-realistic montages. Other features lacking from Elements include the ability to record actions as macros to apply to batches of images, plus independent editing of the red, green and blue colour channels. It's a little disappointing that CMYK colour isn't fully supported, as this is an essential feature for preparing images for professional printing.

PhotoPlus also offers plenty of features aimed at home users, including a

new Makeover Studio. This comprises instructions for carrying out various tasks to improve portrait photos, such as blemish removal, teeth whitening, fake tan and weight loss. Leaving aside the moral implications of all our photos looking like the contents of *OK Magazine*, it's a great feature that's educational and labour saving. Each task is broken down into simple steps, but if you can't be bothered to follow them, a Do This For Me option automates the process.

As with its competitors, PhotoPlus includes Adjustment Layers, which apply colour correction non-destructively, allowing it to be altered or removed later. Version X2 adds Filter Layers, which does the same for a variety of creative effects, adding the ability to reorder effects as well as alter their settings. This is something even the full version of Photoshop lacks, and is a huge boost to productivity.

Sadly, PhotoPlus X2 is crippled by poor performance. Applying a Gaussian Blur effect to a 10-megapixel photo took from 17 to 66 seconds. In Corel Paint Shop Pro, it took around three seconds, while Photoshop Elements took



▲ PhotoPlus has great scope for improving portrait photos

less than a second. Simpler operations showed less dramatic differences in the three applications' performance, but PhotoPlus was always the slowest. Even actions that should be immediate, such as deleting a layer, took a second or two. It's also disappointing how keyboard short cuts aren't available for selecting different tools.

The bundled AlbumPlus SE Pro photo-management software is straightforward and easy to use, with a good range of tagging and browsing options, but it suffers a similar affliction, and regularly made us wait. Unlike Photoshop Elements' 'Organiser' tool and free software such as Google Picasa, it lacks integration with online gallery hosting.

PhotoPlus offers some significant benefits over Photoshop Elements, but its performance lets it down. If you need sophisticated tools such as layer masks, read our review of Corel Paint Shop Pro X2 in next month's *What's New*.

Ben Pitt

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Professional features
- ✗ Sluggish performance

IMAGE-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, 128MB RAM, 222MB disk space
DETAILS www.serif.com

Also consider...

OPENOFFICE OpenOffice.org 2.1

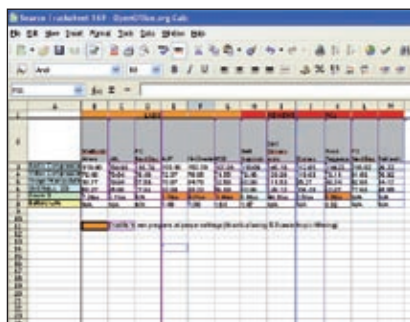
★★★★★

Free

From www.openoffice.org

BEST BUY OpenOffice is a completely free office suite and it's brilliant. It might feel a little old-fashioned next to Microsoft Office's flashy features, but it has a number of excellent applications including a word processor, spreadsheet, database and presentation program. It's an essential piece of software for any PC owner.

OFFICE SUITE Requires Windows 98 or later, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 800MB disk space
DETAILS www.openoffice.org
FULL REVIEW Sep 2007



ADOBE Creative Suite 3 Design Premium

★★★★★

£1,257 inc VAT

From www.purelygadgets.co.uk

BEST BUY Adobe's Creative Suite has quickly become the best bundle of creative software. With its new Design Premium, it's got even better. The bundle includes InDesign, Photoshop Extended, Illustrator, Acrobat Professional, Flash Pro and Dreamweaver – everything you need, whether you're creating work for print or the web.

CREATIVE SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP SP2/Vista, 512MB RAM PRODUCT CODE 29500009
DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk FULL REVIEW Aug 2007



ROXIO Easy Media Creator Suite 10

★★★★★

£34 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk

BEST BUY This suite comes with almost all the media-editing tools you'll ever need. Its greatest strengths are its tight integration between all the modules and its friendly, task-oriented interface. With the recent drop in price, it's now even better value and it's the best media suite you can buy.

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP or Vista, 500MHz processor, 128MB RAM (1.6GHz, 512MB for Vista), 3.2GB disk space PRODUCT CODE 048068411
DETAILS www.roxio.co.uk FULL REVIEW Jan 2008





▲ Norton Internet Security detected 98 per cent of malware in our tests

SYMANTEC Norton Internet Security 2008

★★★★

£35 inc VAT (3 PCs, 1-year subscription)
From www.symantecstore.com

Norton is one of the biggest names in computer security, but recently it's had a reputation for making intrusive software that slows your computer down.

With Norton Internet Security (NIS) 2008, Symantec has set out to dispel that perception. It's certainly less intrusive than previous versions of NIS. We didn't see a single alert from the firewall, despite us deliberately running unusual programs that needed network access and, when a virus was found, NIS quietly removed it and popped up a discreet notification onscreen.

When we tried out the package's ability to detect real malware it did excellently, equalling Kaspersky's exceptional 98 per cent score. It did a good job of spotting email scams, too. We tried picking up 10 different phishing emails and Norton intercepted every one.

Sadly, these strengths are offset by some concerning weaknesses. When we visited a range of websites known to install malware on your machine, Norton detected only 57 per cent of the attacks. Although we were pleased that the firewall didn't pester us, we weren't so happy when the GFI Security Scanner tool found six ways in to our 'protected' system.

The interface feels light, but it has got a fair weight behind it. This is partly due to extra features including personal data protection and home network management. Installing Norton on our test machine raised the boot time from 40 seconds to over a minute. Plus, Windows reported 264MB less free memory, which is one of the biggest footprints we've seen.

Symantec deserves praise for trying to address criticism, and the overall degree of protection offered by Norton Internet Security 2008 is better than many other packages we've seen. At £35 for three PCs, it's one of the better-value options, too. Next to Kaspersky, however, it still looks like a work in progress.

Darien Graham-Smith

SUMMARY

- ✓ Excellent malware detection
- ✗ Firewall could be stronger
- ✗ Still impacts on system resources

INTERNET SECURITY SUITE Requires Windows XP/Vista, 300MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 350MB hard disk space
DETAILS www.symantec.com



▲ Kaspersky's straightforward interface reflects its no-nonsense performance

KASPERSKY Internet Security 7.0

★★★★★

£18 inc VAT (1 PC, 1-year subscription)
From www.kaspersky.com



This latest version of Kaspersky Internet Security isn't too different from the previous one. There are some technical improvements, but the only obvious new feature is parental controls. Still, while it is not revolutionary, but it gets the job done. When tested against a range of real-world malware, including viruses, Trojans, keyloggers and spyware, it intercepted and neutralised 111 out of 114 threats. This is a stellar performance: most security suites score around 95 per cent in this type of test.

Next, we turned to web exploits, which are webpages that try to install malicious code on your system when you visit them. These are a risk even for careful surfers, as criminals can hack into web servers and plant booby traps on respectable sites. We visited 11 different websites hosting such code and Kaspersky Internet Security deflected every single attack.

The firewall is so discreet that, at first, we weren't sure it was switched on, as all our legitimate software ran perfectly without our needing to set any permissions or open any ports. But when we tried to break in, we found we were unable to even see the open ports, which was exactly the result we'd hoped for.

Additional features include a spam filter, instant messaging integration and various tools for cleaning up after an infection. Once we'd installed Kaspersky Internet Security on our test machine, we found we had 240MB less free memory at boot. That's a big chunk, and makes us wary of recommending Kaspersky for older PCs. As long as you have 1GB of RAM, though, you shouldn't see a discernible effect on the responsiveness of your system.

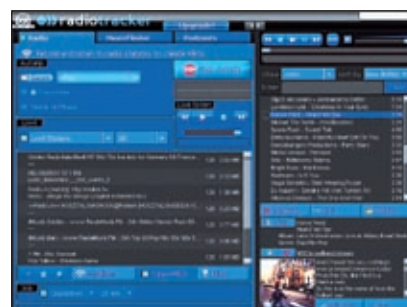
Kaspersky's excellent test results speak for themselves. If you want real security, this is the best we've seen.

Darien Graham-Smith

SUMMARY

- ✓ Excellent protection from all types of malware
- ✓ Unobtrusive and effective firewall
- ✗ Eats up more RAM than we'd like

INTERNET SECURITY SUITE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, 800MHz processor, 512MB RAM, 50MB hard disk space
DETAILS www.kaspersky.com



▲ Get free MP3s by using Radiotracker to record from internet radio streams

RS AUDIALS Radiotracker 4.0 Platinum

★★★★★

£21 inc VAT
From <http://shop.audials.com>



Radiotracker allows you to legally build your MP3 collection by recording songs from thousands of internet radio stations. As long as you don't share these songs with anyone else you're not breaking the law.

We're big fans of the previous versions of Radiotracker, and Platinum is better still. An Autorip function allows you to select a genre of music, or the top 25 genres, and sit back while your hard disk is filled with thousands of tracks. The wishlist is more useful as it allows you to specify particular artists, tracks or albums that you would like to record and even relatively obscure artists are included in Radiotracker's database.

You can limit the number of stations that can be recorded at once, in order to ensure that you still use your broadband connection for browsing and other downloads. It's also possible to pick your favourite stations from a list of around 18,000 or manually add your own. By default, only stations broadcasting at 128Kbit/s or higher are recorded, but you can alter this to your liking.

Radiotracker automatically populates ID3 tags; we found tags to be very accurate, and it's simple to edit incorrect ones. For the majority of tracks, album art is downloaded; occasionally lyrics are, too.

As DJs tend to talk over the beginning and end of tracks, Radiotracker detects this and fades tracks in and out. However, it means you end up with a shortened version – one of the limitations of the recording technique.

New with version 4 is a podcast database for your favourite audio or video podcasts. It's also possible to burn audio CDs. Finally, it can synchronise your music with an MP3 player, and for just £21 it's a great buy.

Jim Martin

SUMMARY

- ✓ Free, high-quality music
- ✓ Get the tracks you want
- ✗ Tracks usually shortened to remove DJ

MP3 DOWNLOAD SOFTWARE Requires Windows Me or later, hard disk space for tracks
PRODUCT CODE 300099362
DETAILS www.radiotracker.co.uk